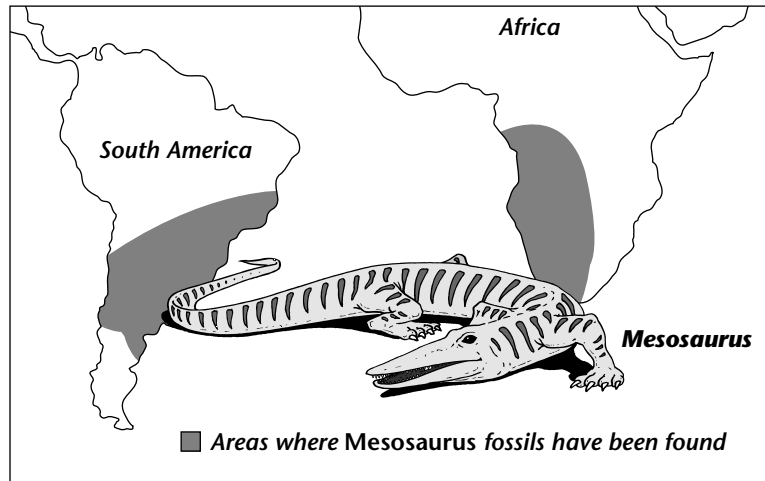


## The Curious Case of *Mesosaurus*



About 265 million years ago, a reptile called *Mesosaurus* lived in just a few places on Earth. This fairly small, lizard-like reptile measured 71 centimeters from its nose to the tip of its tail—or about two thirds of a meter. Its body was long and flexible, perfect for swimming swiftly through the water. *Mesosaurus* was a hunter of small fish and other aquatic animals. Its webbed feet and long tail worked like powerful paddles as it chased and captured its food. Like all other reptiles, *Mesosaurus* breathed air, so it had to return to the surface after hunting underwater. Freshwater ponds and lakes were its habitat.

In the 1800s, scientists began finding fossils of these ancient reptiles, which had long since become extinct. These fossils were found in only two regions, southern Africa and the southern part of South America. The shaded areas on the map show where fossils of *Mesosaurus* have been discovered. This distribution is a curious one—only two regions far from each other and separated by the Atlantic Ocean. What could explain this distribution?

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Describe the kind of environment in which *Mesosaurus* lived.
2. Is it likely that *Mesosaurus* swam back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean? Explain.
3. What could explain this distribution of *Mesosaurus* fossils?
4. Does the case of *Mesosaurus* support Wegener's theory of continental drift? Explain why or why not.
5. Does the case by itself prove the theory? Explain why or why not.